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Cleanup Plan Reported For Waukegan Harbor

CHICAGO (UPI) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois officials Wednesday announced plans to use Superfund money to clean up toxic wastes in Waukegan Harbor.

Nearly 1 million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls — PCBs — have been found in and around the harbor about 30 miles north of Chicago. PCBs, a synthetic petroleum substitute, are suspected of causing cancer.

Estimated cost of the cleanup is $14 million. EPA officials said they hoped to have the cleanup completed by the end of the year.

Scientists Report Bacteria That Can Decompose PCBs

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KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Microbiologists at the University of Tennessee say they have found bacteria that can decompose PCBs, a long-lasting chemical compound thought to cause cancer.

In tests over a five-year period under simulated natural conditions, the naturally occurring bacteria have reduced the dangerous pollutant to water and carbon dioxide, the scientists said.

PCBs — short for polychlorinated biphenyls — represent one of America's most stubborn pollution problems. The EPA classifies the substance as a "priority pollutant" because it usually will not break down into non-toxic elements.

The manufacture of PCBs, once widely used in electrical transformers, was banned in 1977 after studies had linked it to cancer and liver disease.